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Viewing cable 07CAIRO1128, MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD TO CONTEST SHURA ELECTIONS,

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Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#07CAIRO1128**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
07CAIRO1128	2007-04-17 15:16	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Cairo

Appears in these articles:

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NSC FOR WATERS, DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ELA AND INR/I

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/03/2017

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SUBJECT: MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD TO CONTEST SHURA ELECTIONS,
DELAYS FORMATION OF POLITICAL PARTY (C-NE6-01656)

REF: A. CAIRO 671

[¶](#)B. CAIRO 144

[¶](#)C. CAIRO 409

Classified By: Minister-Counselor for Economic and Political Affairs,
William R. Stewart, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[¶](#)1. (C) Summary: Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood (MB) has announced it will run "no more than twenty candidates" in the June Shura Council elections, and, despite a recent constitutional change banning "any political activity or political parties" based on religion, the group still plans to campaign using its traditional slogan, "Islam is the Solution." The MB's decision to run only twenty candidates appears to be a deliberate effort to de-escalate tensions with the government while simultaneously asserting the MB's continuing role as the primary opposition to the ruling

National Democratic Party (NDP). Work seems to be continuing on the formation of a political party (with the MB reportedly reaching out to Copts to participate), but the announcement of a formal platform has reportedly been delayed until after the Shura elections. The military trials of 40 MB members, including the MB's third-highest official, have not yet been held; it is unclear when the tribunals will be convened. These developments occur against the backdrop of continuing arrests of MB members, with an estimated 130 more detained in March and April. End Summary.

SHURA ELECTIONS: "WE WILL FIELD NO MORE
THAN TWENTY CANDIDATES"

¶2. (SBU) Following weeks of speculation and contradictory press reports, Mohamed Habib, Deputy Supreme Guide of the MB, announced that the group will participate in the upcoming Shura Council elections, but "will field no more than twenty candidates." (Note: The GOE has not yet set the exact date for the elections, but in private conversations, NDP interlocutors have told us the balloting will be held "sometime" between June 10-16. 88 seats of the 264-member Council will be contested, and an additional 44 members appointed by President Hosni Mubarak, in accordance with the constitutional requirement that fifty-percent of the total membership of the Council be renewed, either by election or appointment, every three years. End note). In his announcement, Habib noted that the MB was running, "due to our belief in the importance of participating in popular and political action ... and to seeking reform through constitutional and legal channels." In subsequent comments to the Associated Press (reported April 17), Habib noted that the MB's participation "is not challenging the government as much as emphasizing the rights of all Egyptian citizens to participate in politics via legitimate channels." Commenting on the MB's decision during a recent TV interview, influential MB member Essam El-Erian noted, "By participating with only twenty candidates, we want to deliver a message of assurance that we do not want to rival anybody and that all we want is reform We are not seeking confrontation at all. We are working to present the reality of our identity and ideology."

¶3. (C) The MB's decision to run only twenty candidates appears to be a deliberate effort to de-escalate tensions with the regime while simultaneously asserting the MB's continuing role as the primary opposition to the NDP. It suggests that, should a presidential election occur prior to the next Shura elections in 2010, the MB will not be able to put forward a candidate (Note: The next Egyptian presidential race is currently scheduled for 2011. End note). According to constitutional Article 76, in order for a non-party candidate to run in a presidential race, he must have the endorsement of at least 25 Shura Council members, as well as 65 members of the People's Assembly, and 140 local council members. Even if the MB won all twenty Shura seats it will contest (an unlikely outcome, given the expected interference of the GOE in the voting, as well as the challenges presented by the nature of Shura Council races, which comprise large unwieldy districts that do not play to the MB's strengths), it would not have the 25 Shura seats necessary to endorse a future presidential candidate. Also noteworthy is that the MB has chosen to contest the elections despite repeated public assertions that ongoing GOE detentions of MB members over the past several months have specifically targeted several potential MB candidates. Despite those arrests, the organization apparently believes it still has the depth and organizational wherewithal to put forward candidates.

¶4. (C) Habib has also said that the MB will campaign using its traditional slogan, "Islam is the Solution." (Note: As reported ref A, constitutional Article 5 was recently amended to read, "Any political activity or political parties shall not be based on religious authority or foundation, or on any discrimination on the basis of race or gender." Speculation has been intense among Cairo's political analysts as to

whether the MB will be able to henceforth use their recognizable motto, which helps voters to identify a particular candidate as MB-affiliated, as it seemingly contradicts Article 5. End note). Independent daily Al-Masry Al-Yom on April 15 quoted Habib as stating that, "The slogan 'Islam is the Solution' ... is in line with Article 2 of the constitution, which states that Islamic Shari'a is the main source of legislation." He is also quoted as noting, "the Administrative Judiciary Court had previously issued a ruling that approves this slogan; hence, the slogan does not run counter to the constitution or the law." Some observers have noted the apparent contradiction between the revised Article 5 and the NDP's own liberal use of religious slogans in the recent national referendum, citing NDP posters such as "Your Vote is a Duty Before God," and the fatwa issued by the Grand Shaykh of Al-Azhar, stating that voting in the referendum was a religious duty.

SLOWDOWN IN FORMATION OF POLITICAL PARTY

15. (SBU) The MB's plan to form a political party (ref B), appears to have been put on the back-burner until after the Shura elections, despite the MB's mid-January statements that the party's draft platform would be ready "in a few weeks." Hints of the contents of the platform are being reported in Egypt's independent press, but have been disavowed in several interviews by MB Supreme Guide Mohamed Mahdy Akef. Akef has repeatedly stated that the platform is "in the final drafting phase," and will be announced, "when we are done with it and when the timing is suitable." Egyptian and international Arab papers have also reported on the MB's alleged efforts to recruit Copts to join the new party. On April 13, the London-based Al-Quds Al-Arabi reported that the MB had "negotiated with several Coptic businessman aspiring to political activities outside of the NDP." The article quoted MP Hamdi Hassan, spokesman for the MB's parliamentary bloc, as saying that, "contacts between the Brothers and the Copts have never stopped, and historic ties bind the two sides." Hassan was also described as anticipating a harsh government response to this MB initiative, aimed at preventing any Copts from joining the party, "so that the MB can be (continued) to be depicted as a terrorist faction that deliberately denies the other."

16. (C) Two Embassy contacts close to the MB separately told us that Mohamed Mursi (Guidance Council member, and as head of the MB's Political Bureau, the MB official charged with oversight of party formation effort) undertook a regional tour in February, visiting Morocco, Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and Kuwait, with the goal of assessing how Islamist parties in other countries operate. Mursi reportedly is concerned that, by forming a political party, the MB may dilute its traditional focus on "Da'wa" (proselytizing) and charity activities, potentially losing the group's long-time successful blend of ideology and good works, and becoming "just another opposition party."

NO DATE YET FOR MILITARY TRIBUNALS

17. (C) As reported ref C, in early February President Mubarak transferred the cases of 40 MB members (including the third-highest official in the MB hierarchy, Second Deputy Chairman Khairat Al-Shatir), to military tribunals, following a Cairo criminal court's January 29 dismissal of all charges against sixteen of the defendants. The military trials have not yet been held; in the interim, the defendants remain in detention. An Embassy contact who recently visited a Cairo military base which houses a military prison told poloff that a courtroom facility is being built on the base, and "looks like it should be completed soon." He assumed that the MB military trials would be held at this installation, inaccessible to the public and "far away from the media spotlight." The MB has undertaken several lawsuits (unsuccessful to date) disputing the legality of the referral

of the 40 defendants to a military tribunal. These efforts include an appeal to the Supreme Constitutional Court (which refused to hear the case), and a subsequent appeal to the Administrative Court of the State Council.

18. (SBU) On April 12, the families of 36 of the detainees sent a joint letter to Amnesty International, stating, "We are presenting this complaint against the Egyptian government to you, asking you to ... show this persecution and discrimination to the whole world. We also ask you to present this problem to the UN Human Rights Council, as it is a complaint from persecuted individuals and a group of Egyptian reformists that face discrimination due to their political views." In an uncharacteristic development, recent statements from MB officials appear to be appealing to the international community and the USG for support regarding the military tribunals. A March 27 statement on "Dialogue Between Islamists and the West" by MB parliamentary bloc leader Saad Al-Katatni noted that, "Western governments have remained silent despite the continuous violations of human rights by the regimes of the region. The silence that followed the transfer of a large number of MB leaders, including deputy chairman Al-Shatir and two other Guidance Council members, to a military tribunal stands as a provocative example." Recent public comments by Essam El-Erian have been similarly critical of the USG on this point. The detainees themselves, in a February 24 joint public statement, stated that, "We ask that all respected and honest citizens in Egypt, and everyone advocating justice all over the world, to work for easing the injustice and oppression from which the political opposition is suffering in Egypt."

ARRESTS CONTINUING

19. (SBU) Meanwhile, the government's campaign of arrests of MB members (ref B), continues undiminished, with approximately 130 more MB members detained in March and April; we estimate 30 of them were subsequently released. In another indication of the GOE's diminished tolerance of the MB, security forces arrested prominent MB blogger Abdul Moneim Mahmoud, proprietor of the Arabic language blog, "Ana Ikhwan" ("I am the Brotherhood"), on April 15 as he attempted to depart Cairo International Airport. Moneim, who is in his late twenties and has also played an increasingly prominent role producing the MB's influential English and Arabic websites, had assumed a higher profile in recent months as a result of his blog entries critical of the GOE, and because of his key role in the MB's media outreach. A GOE prosecutor has ordered Moneim detained for fifteen days in order to investigate his "membership in an illegal organization and defaming Egypt's image." Some activists in the Egyptian blogosphere and human rights organizations appear to be gearing up for a "Free Moneim" campaign.

MB AIMING FOR LOWER PROFILE?

10. (C) Several contacts have advised us that the MB has been hit hard by the continuing arrests, as well as the GOE's seizing and freezing of numerous MB assets, and is consequently aiming to "de-escalate" MB-government tensions by adopting a "lower profile." One independent parliamentarian told poloff that his MB colleagues in the People's Assembly had informed him that, "the MB's Guidance Council sent out instructions across the country to lie low." He noted a change in the behavior of the MB MP's who share his countryside district: "they usually set up their own health clinics, but this month, they came to me and asked if they could assist with medical charity events that I was organizing instead, so as not to attract attention." Another contact close to the MB commented that the new constitutional amendments have "scared" the group, noting that the changes to constitutional Article 5 may give the GOE legal basis to target not just the MB's political activities,

but also their NGO and charity efforts. An academic contact, recounting a recent conversation with the MB's Habib, said that the Deputy Supreme Guide is focused on lowering tensions in the short-term, and protecting the long-term continuity of the MB's array of efforts - political and otherwise; "we are patient ... we are in no rush ... time is on our side."

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